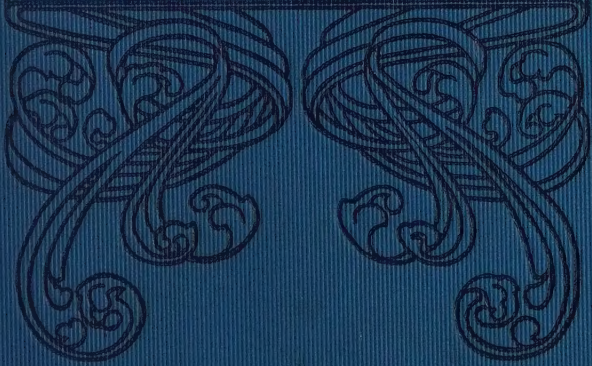
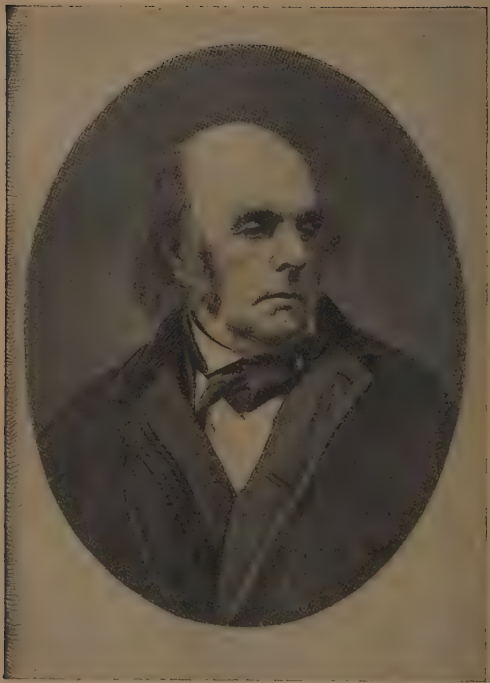
RUBÁIYÁT
OF OMAR KHAYYÁM

RENDERED INTO ENGLISH
VERSE BY
EDWARD FITZGERALD



Rubáiyát of

Omar Khayyám



EDWARD FITZGERALD.

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

Rendered into English Verse

By EDWARD FITZGERALD

FOURTH EDITION WITH NOTES

Together with a Tribute in Quatrains by Andrew Lang, a brief Biography of both Poet and Translator, and a descriptive article by Edward S. Holden

With Illustrations

By GILBERT JAMES

NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP

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Biographical Preface.

EDWARD FITZGERALD, whom the world has already learned, in spite of his own efforts to remain within the shadow of anonymity, to look upon as one of the rarest poets of the century, was born at Bredfield, in Suffolk, on the 31st of March, 1809. He was the third son of John Purcell, of Kilkenny, in Ireland, who, marrying Miss Mary Frances Fitzgerald, daughter of John Fitzgerald, of Williamstown, County Waterford, added that distinguished name to his own patronymic; and the future Omar was

thus doubly of Irish extraction. (Both the families of Purcell and Fitzgerald claim descent from Norman warriors of the eleventh century.) This circumstance is thought to have had some influence in attracting him to the study of Persian poetry, Iran and Erin being almost convertible terms in the early days of modern ethnology. After some years of primary education at the grammar school of Bury St. Edmunds, he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1826, and there formed acquaintance with several young men of great abilities, most of whom rose to distinction before him, but never ceased to regard with affectionate remembrance the quiet and amiable associate of their college-days. Amongst them were Alfred Tennyson, James Spedding, William Bodham Donne, John Mitchell Kemble, and William Makepeace Thackeray; and

their long friendship has been touchingly referred to by the Laureate in dedicating his last poem to the memory of Edward Fitzgerald. "Euphranor," our author's earliest printed work, affords a curious picture of his academic life and associations. Its substantial reality is evident beneath the thin disguise of the symbolical or classical names which he gives to the personages of the colloquy; and the speeches which he puts into his own mouth are full of the humorous gravity, the whimsical and kindly philosophy, which remained his distinguishing characteristics till the end. This book was first published in 1851; a second and a third edition were printed some years later; all anonymous, and each of the latter two differing from its predecessor by changes in the text which were not indicated on the title-pages.

"Euphranor" furnishes a good many characterizations which would be useful for any writer treating upon Cambridge society in the third decade of this century. Kenelm Digby, the author of the "Broadstone of Honour," had left Cambridge before the time when Euphranor held his "dialogue," but he is picturesquely recollected as "a grand swarthy fellow who might have stepped out of the canvas of some knightly portrait in his father's hall—perhaps the living image of one sleeping under some cross-legged *effigies* in the church." In "Euphranor," it is easy to discover the earliest phase of the unconquerable attachment which Fitzgerald entertained for his college and his life-long friends, and which induced him in later days to make frequent visits to Cambridge, renewing and refreshing the old ties of custom and friendship. In

fact, his disposition was affectionate to a fault, and he betrayed his consciousness of weakness in that respect by referring playfully at times to "a certain natural lubricity" which he attributed to the Irish character, and professed to discover especially in himself. This amiability of temper endeared him to many friends of totally dissimilar tastes and qualities; and, by enlarging his sympathies, enabled him to enjoy the fructifying influence of studies pursued in communion with scholars more profound than himself, but less gifted with the power of expression. One of the younger Cambridge men with whom he became intimate during his periodical pilgrimages to the university, was Edward B. Cowell, a man of the highest attainment in Oriental learning, who resembled Fitzgerald himself in the possession of a warm and genial heart and the

most unobtrusive modesty. From Cowell he could easily learn that the hypothetical affinity between the names of Erin and Iran belonged to an obsolete stage of etymology; but the attraction of a far-fetched theory was replaced by the charm of reading Persian poetry in companionship with his young friend, who was equally competent to enjoy and to analyze the beauties of a literature that formed a portion of his regular studies. They read together the poetical remains of Khayyám—a choice of reading which sufficiently indicates the depth and range of Mr. Cowell's knowledge. Omar Khayyám, although not quite forgotten, enjoyed in the history of Persian literature a celebrity like that of Occleve and Gower in our own. In the many *Tazkirát* (memoirs or memorials) of Poets, he was mentioned and quoted with esteem; but his poems

labouring as they did under the original sin of heresy and atheism, were seldom looked at, and, from lack of demand on the part of readers, had become rarer than those of most other writers since the days of Firdausi European scholars knew little of his works beyond his Arabic treatise on Algebra, and Mr. Cowell may be said to have disentombed his poems from oblivion. Now, thanks to the fine taste of that scholar, and to the transmuting genius of Fitzgerald, no Persian poet is so well known in the western world as Abu-'l-fat'h 'Omar son of Ibrahim the Tentmaker of Naishápúr, whose manhood synchronizes with the Norman conquest of England, and who took for his poetic name (*takhallus*) the designation of his father's trade (*Khayyám*). The "Rubá'iyyát" (Quatrains) do not compose a single poem divided into a certain number of

stanzas; there is no continuity of plan in them, and each stanza is a distinct thought expressed in musical verse. There is no other element of unity in them than the general tendency of the Epicurean idea, and the arbitrary divan form by which they are grouped according to the alphabetical arrangement of the final letters; those in which the rhymes end in *a* constituting the first division, those with *b* the second, and so on. The peculiar attitude towards religion and the old questions of fate, immortality, the origin and the destiny of man, which educated thinkers have assumed in the present age of Christendom, is found admirably foreshadowed in the fantastic verses of Khayyám, who was no more of a Mohammedan than many of our best writers are Christians. His philosophical and Horatian fancies—graced as they are by the charms

of a lyrical expression equal to that of Horace, and a vivid brilliance of imagination to which the Roman poet could make no claim—exercised a powerful influence upon Fitzgerald's mind, and coloured his thoughts to such a degree that even when he oversteps the largest licence allowed to a translator, his phrases reproduce the spirit and manner of his original with a nearer approach to perfection than would appear possible. It is usually supposed that there is more of Fitzgerald than of Khayyám in the English "Rubá'iyyát," and that the old Persian simply afforded themes for the Anglo-Irishman's display of poetic power; but nothing could be further from the truth. The French translator, J. B. Nicolas, and the English one, Mr. Whinfield, supply a closer mechanical reflection of the sense in each separate stanza; but Mr. Fitzgerald has, in

some instances, given a version equally close and exact; in others, rejointed scattered phrases from more than one stanza of his original, and thus accomplished a feat of marvellous poetical transfusion. He frequently turns literally into English the strange outlandish imagery which Mr. Whinfield thought necessary to replace by more intelligible banalities, and in this way the magic of his genius has successfully transplanted into the garden of English poesy exotics that bloom like native flowers.

One of Mr. Fitzgerald's Woodbridge friends was Bernard Barton, the Quaker poet, with whom he maintained for many years the most intimate and cordial intercourse, and whose daughter Lucy he married. He wrote the memoir of his friend's life which appeared in the posthumous volume of Barton's poems.

The story of his married life was a short one. With all the overflowing amiability of his nature, there were mingled certain peculiarities or waywardnesses which were more suitable to the freedom of celibacy than to the staidness of matrimonial life. A separation took place by mutual agreement, and Fitzgerald behaved in this circumstance with the generosity and unselfishness which were apparent in all his whims no less than in his more deliberate actions. Indeed, his entire career was marked by an unchanging goodness of heart and a genial kindliness; and no one could complain of having ever endured hurt or ill-treatment at his hands. His pleasures were innocent and simple. Amongst the more delightful, he counted the short coasting trips, occupying no more than a day or two at a time, which he used to make in his own

yacht from Lowestoft, accompanied only by a crew of two men, and such a friend as Cowell, with a large pastry and a few bottles of wine to supply their material wants. It is needless to say that books were also put into the cabin, and that the symposia of the friends were thus brightened by communion with the minds of the great departed. Fitzgerald's enjoyment of gnomic wisdom enshrined in words of exquisite propriety was evinced by the frequency with which he used to read Montaigne's essays and Madame de Sévigné's letters, and the various works from which he extracted and published his collection of wise saws entitled "Polonius." This taste was allied to a love for what was classical and correct in literature, by which he was also enabled to appreciate the prim and formal muse of Crabbe, in whose grandson's house he died.

His second printed work was the "Polonius," already referred to, which appeared in 1852. It exemplifies his favourite reading, being a collection of extracts, sometimes short proverbial phrases, sometimes longer pieces of characterization or reflection, arranged under abstract headings. He occasionally quotes Dr. Johnson, for whom he entertained sincere admiration; but the ponderous and artificial fabric of Johnsonese did not please him like the language of Bacon, Fuller, Sir Thomas Browne, Coleridge, whom he cites frequently. A disproportionate abundance of wise words was drawn from Carlyle; his original views, his forcible sense, and the friendship with which Fitzgerald regarded him, having apparently blinded the latter to the ungainly style and ungraceful mannerisms of the Chelsea sage. (It was Thackeray who first made them

personally acquainted forty years ago; and Fitzgerald remained always loyal to his first instincts of affection and admiration.[1]) "Polonius" also marks the period of his earliest attention to Persian studies, as he quotes in it the great Sufi poet Jalál-ud-dín-Rúmi, whose "Masnavi" has lately been translated into English by Mr. Redhouse, but whom Fitzgerald can only have seen in the original, He, however, spells the name *Jallaladin*, an

[1] The close relation that subsisted between Fitzgerald and Carlyle has lately been made patent by an article in the *Historical Review* upon the Squire papers,—those celebrated documents purporting to be contemporary records of Cromwell's time,—which were accepted by Carlyle as genuine, but which other scholars have asserted from internal evidence to be modern forgeries. However the question may be decided, the fact which concerns us here is that our poet was the negotiator between Mr. Squire and Carlyle, and that his correspondence with the latter upon the subject reveals the intimate nature of their acquaintance.

incorrect form of which he could not have been guilty at the time when he produced Omar Khayyám, and which thus betrays that he had not long been engaged with Irani literature. He was very fond of Montaigne's essays, and of Pascal's "Pensées"; but his "Polonius" reveals a sort of dislike and contempt for Voltaire. Amongst the Germans, Jean Paul, Goethe, Alexander von Humboldt, and August Wilhelm von Schlegel attracted him greatly; but he seems to have read little German, and probably only quoted translations. His favourite motto was "Plain Living and High Thinking," and he expresses great reverence for all things manly, simple, and true. The laws and institutions of England were, in his eyes, of the highest value and sacredness; and whatever Irish sympathies he had would never have diverted his affections

from the Union to Home Rule. This is strongly illustrated by some original lines of blank verse at the end of "Polonius," annexed to his quotation, under "Æsthetics," of the words in which Lord Palmerston eulogized Mr. Gladstone for having devoted his Neapolitan tour to an inspection of the prisons.

Fitzgerald's next printed work was a translation of Six Dramas of Calderon, published in 1853, which was unfavourably received at the time, and consequently withdrawn by him from circulation. His name appeared on the title-page,—a concession to publicity which was so unusual with him that it must have been made under strong pressure from his friends. The book is in nervous blank verse, a mode of composition which he handled with great ease and skill. There is no waste of power in diffuseness and no employment of

unnecessary epithets. It gives the impression of a work of the Shakespearian age, and reveals a kindred felicity, strength, and directness of language. It deserves to rank with his best efforts in poetry, but its ill-success made him feel that the publication of his name was an unfavourable experiment, and he never again repeated it. His great modesty, however, would sufficiently account for this shyness. Of "Omar Khayyám," even after the little book had won its way to general esteem, he used to say that the suggested addition of his name on the title would imply an assumption of importance which he considered that his "transmogrification" of the Persian poet did not possess.

Fitzgerald's conception of a translator's privilege is well set forth in the prefaces of his versions from Calderon, and the "Aga-

memnon" of Æschylus. He maintained that, in the absence of the perfect poet, who shall re-create in his own language the body and soul of his original, the best system is that of a paraphrase conserving the spirit of the author,—a sort of literary metempsychosis. Calderon, Æschylus, and Omar Khayyám were all treated with equal licence, so far as form is concerned,—the last, perhaps, the most arbitrarily; but the result is not unsatisfactory as having given us perfect English poems instinct with the true flavour of their prototypes. The Persian was probably somewhat more Horatian and less melancholy, the Greek a little less florid and mystic, the Spaniard more lyrical and fluent, than their metaphrast has made them; but the essential spirit has not escaped in transfusion. Only a man of singular gifts could have performed

the achievement, and these works attest Mr. Fitzgerald's right to rank amongst the finest poets of the century. About the same time as he printed his Calderon, another set of translations from the same dramatist was published by the late D. F. MacCarthy; a scholar whose acquaintance with Castilian literature was much deeper than Mr. Fitzgerald's, and who also possessed poetical abilities of no mean order, with a totally different sense of the translator's duty. The popularity of MacCarthy's versions has been considerable, and as an equivalent rendering of the original in sense and form his work is valuable. Spaniards familiar with the English language rate its merit highly; but there can be little question of the very great superiority of Mr. Fitzgerald's work as a contribution to English literature. It is indeed only from this point

of view that we should regard all the literary labours of our author. They are English poetical work of fine quality, dashed with a pleasant outlandish flavour which heightens their charm; and it is as English poems, not as translations, that they have endeared themselves even more to the American English than to the mixed Britons of England.

It was an occasion of no small moment to Mr. Fitzgerald's fame, and to the intellectual gratification of many thousands of readers, when he took his little packet of "Rubá'iyyát" to Mr. Quaritch in the latter part of the year 1858. It was printed as a small quarto pamphlet, bearing the publisher's name but not the author's; and although apparently a complete failure at first,—a failure which Mr. Fitzgerald regretted less on his own account than on that of his publisher, to whom he had gener-

ously made a present of the book,—received, nevertheless, a sufficient distribution by being quickly reduced from the price of five shillings and placed in the box of cheap books marked a penny each. Thus forced into circulation, the two hundred copies which had been printed were soon exhausted. Among the buyers were Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Mr. Swinburne, Captain (now Sir Richard) Burton, and Mr. William Simpson, the accomplished artist of the *Illustrated London News*. The influence exercised by the first three, especially by Rossetti, upon a clique of young men who have since grown to distinction, was sufficient to attract observation to the singular beauties of the poem anonymously translated from the Persian. Most readers had no possible opportunity of discovering whether it was a disguised original or an actual translation;—

even Captain Burton enjoyed probably but little chance of seeing a manuscript of the Persian "Rubá'iyyát." The Oriental imagery and allusions were too thickly scattered throughout the verses to favour the notion that they could be the original work of an Englishman; yet it was shrewdly suspected by most of the appreciative readers that the "translator" was substantially the author and creator of the poem. In the refuge of his anonymity, Fitzgerald derived an innocent gratification from the curiosity that was aroused on all sides. After the first edition had disappeared, inquiries for the little book became frequent, and in the year 1868 he gave the MS. of his second edition to Mr. Quaritch, and the "Rubá'iyyát" came into circulation once more, but with several alterations and additions by which the number of stanzas was somewhat increased

beyond the original seventy-five. Most of the changes were, as might have been expected, improvements; but in some instances the author's taste or caprice was at fault,—notably in the first *Rubá'iy*. His fastidious desire to avoid anything that seemed *baroque* or unnatural, or appeared like plagiarism, may have influenced him; but it was probably because he had already used the idea in his rendering of Jámí's "Salámán," that he sacrificed a fine and novel piece of imagery in his first stanza and replaced it by one of much more ordinary character. If it were from a dislike to pervert his original too largely, he had no need to be so scrupulous, since he dealt on the whole with the "Rubá'iyyát" as though he had the licence of absolute authorship, changing, transposing, and manipulating the substance of the Persian quatrains with singular freedom. The

vogue of "old Omar" (as he would affectionately call his work) went on increasing, and American readers took it up with eagerness. In those days, the mere mention of Omar Khayyám between two strangers meeting fortuitously acted like a sign of freemasonry and established frequently a bond of friendship. Some curious instances of this have been related. A remarkable feature of the Omar-cult in the United States was the circumstance that single individuals bought numbers of copies for gratuitous distribution before the book was reprinted in America. Its editions have been relatively numerous, when we consider how restricted was the circle of readers who could understand the peculiar beauties of the work. A third edition appeared in 1872, with some further alterations, and may be regarded as virtually the author's final revision, for it

hardly differs at all from the text of the fourth edition, which appeared in 1879. This last formed the first portion of a volume entitled "Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám; and the Salámán and Absál of Jámí; rendered into English verse." The "Salámán" (which had already been printed in separate form in 1856) is a poem chiefly in blank verse, interspersed with various metres (although it is all in one measure in the original) embodying a love-story of mystic significance; for Jámí was, unlike Omar Khayyám, a true Sufi, and indeed differed in other respects, his celebrity as a pious Mussulman doctor being equal to his fame as a poet. He lived in the fifteenth century, in a period of literary brilliance and decay; and the rich exuberance of his poetry, full of far-fetched conceits, involved expressions, overstrained imagery and false taste,

offers a stong contrast to the simpler and more forcible language of Khayyám. There is little use of Arabic in the earlier poet; he preferred the vernacular speech to the mongrel language which was fashionable among the heirs of the Saracen conquerors; but Jámí's composition is largely embroidered with Arabic.

Mr. Fitzgerald had from his early days been thrown into contact with the Crabbe family; the Reverend George Crabbe (the poet's grandson) was an intimate friend of his, and it was on a visit to Morton Rectory that Fitzgerald died. As we know that friendship has power to warp the judgment, we shall not probably be wrong in supposing that his enthusiastic admiration for Crabbe's poems was not the product of sound, impartial criticism. He attempted to reintroduce them to the world by publishing a little volume of

"Readings from Crabbe," produced in the last year of his life, but without success. A different fate awaited his "Agamemnon: a tragedy taken from Æschylus," which was first printed privately by him, and afterwards published with alterations in 1876. It is a very free rendering from the Greek, and full of a poetical beauty which is but partly assignable to Æschylus. Without attaining to anything like the celebrity and admiration which have followed Omar Khayyám, the "Agamemnon" has achieved much more than a *succès d'estime*. Mr. Fitzgerald's renderings from the Greek were not confined to this one essay; he also translated the two Œdipus dramas of Sophocles, but left them unfinished in manuscript till Prof. Eliot Norton had a sight of them about seven or eight years ago and urged him to complete his work. When this

was done, he had them set in type, but only a very few proofs can have been struck off, as it seems that, at least in England, no more than one or two copies were sent out by the author. In a similar way he printed translations of two of Calderon's plays not included in the published "Six Dramas"—namely, "La Vida es Sueño," and "El Magico Prodigioso" (both ranking among the Spaniard's finest work); but they also were withheld from the public and all but half a dozen friends.

When his old boatman died, about ten years ago, he abandoned his nautical exercises and gave up his yacht for ever. During the last few years of his life, he divided his time between Cambridge, Crabbe's house, and his own home at Little Grange, near Woodbridge, where he received occasional visits from friends and relatives.

Biographical Preface

This edition of the "Omar Khayyám" is a modest memorial of one of the most modest men who have enriched English literature with poetry of distinct and permanent value. His best epitaph is found in Tennyson's "Tiresias and other poems," published immediately after our author's quiet exit from life, in 1883, in the seventy-fifth year of his age.

M. K.

To Omar Khayyám.

Wise Omar, do the Southern Breezes fling,
Above your Grave, at ending of the Spring,
The Snowdrift of the petals of the Rose,
The wild white Roses you were wont to sing?

Far in the South I know a Land divine,[1]
And there is many a Saint and many a Shrine,
And over all the shrines the Blossom blows
Of Roses that were dear to you as wine.

You were a Saint of unbelieving days,
Liking your Life and happy in men's Praise;
Enough for you the Shade beneath the Bough,
Enough to watch the wild World go its Ways.

[1] The hills above San Remo, where rose-bushes are planted by the shrines. Omar desired that his grave might be where the wind would scatter rose-leaves over it.

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—" Open then the Door ! "

To Omar Khayyám

Dreadless and hopeless thou of Heaven or Hell,
Careless of Words thou hadst not Skill to spell,
Content to know not all thou knowest now,
What's Death? Doth any Pitcher dread the Well?

The Pitchers we, whose Maker makes them ill,
Shall He torment them if they chance to spill?
Nay, like the broken potsherds are we cast
Forth and forgotten,—and what will be will!

So still were we, before the months began
That rounded us and shaped us into Man.
So still we *shall* be, surely, at the last,
Dreamless, untouched of Blessing or of Ban!

Ah, strange it seems that this thy common thought—
How all things have been, ay, and shall be nought—
Was ancient Wisdom in thine ancient East,
In those old Days when Senlac fight was fought.

Which gave our England for a captive Land
To pious Chiefs of a believing Band,
A gift to the Believer from the Priest,
Tossed from the Holy to the blood-red Hand![1]

Yea, thou wert singing when that Arrow clave
Through helm and brain of him who could not save
His England, even of Harold, Godwin's son;
The high tide murmurs by the Hero's grave![2]

And *thou* wert wreathing Roses—who can tell?—
Or chanting for some girl that pleased thee well,
Or satst at wine in Naisháp[ú]r, when dun
The twilight veiled the field where Harold fell!

[1] Omar was contemporary with the battle of Hastings.

[2] Per mandata Ducis, Rex hic, Heralde, quiescis,
Ut custos maneas littoris et pelagi.

To Omar Khayyám

The salt Sea-waves above him rage and roam!
Along the white Walls of his guarded Home
No Zephyr stirs the Rose, but o'er the wave
The wild Wind beats the Breakers into Foam!

And dear to him, as Roses were to thee,
Rings long the Roar of Onset of the Sea;
The *Swan's Path* of his Fathers is his grave:
His sleep, methinks, is sound as thine can be.

His was the Age of Faith, when all the West
Looked to the Priest for torment or for rest;
And thou wert living then, and didst not heed
The Saint who banned thee or the Saint who blessed!

Ages of Progress! These eight hundred years
Hath Europe shuddered with her hopes or fears,
And now!—she listens in the wilderness
To *thee*, and half believeth what she hears:

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

Hadst *thou* THE SECRET? Ah, and who may tell?
"An hour we have," thou saidst. "Ah, waste
it well!"
An hour we have, and yet Eternity
Looms o'er us, and the thought of Heaven or
Hell!

Nay, we can never be as wise as thou,
O idle singer 'neath the blossomed bough.
Nay, and we cannot be content to die.
We cannot shirk the questions "Where?" and
"How?"

Ah, not from learned Peace and gay Content
Shall we of England go the way he went—
The Singer of the Red Wine and the Rose—
Nay, otherwise than *his* our Day is spent!

Serene he dwelt in fragrant Naisháp úr,
But we must wander while the Stars endure.
He knew THE SECRET: we have none that
knows,
No Man so sure as Omar once was sure!

ANDREW LANG.

But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

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Omar Khayyám
the Astronomer-Poet
of Persia

Omar Khayyám
The Astronomer-Poet of Persia

By Edward Fitzgerald

Omar Khayyám was born at Naisháp úr in Khorassán in the latter half of our Eleventh, and died within the First Quarter of our Twelfth Century. The Slender Story of his Life is curiously twined about that of two other very considerable Figures in their Time and Country: one of whom tells the Story of all Three. This was Nizám-ul-Mulk, Vizyr to Alp Arslán the Son, and Malik Shah the

Grandson, of Toghrul Beg the Tartar, who had wrested Persia from the feeble successor of Mahmúd the Great, and founded that Seljukian Dynasty which finally roused Europe into the Crusades. This Nizám-ul-Mulk, in his *Wasiyat*—or *Testament*—which he wrote and left as a Memorial for future Statesmen—relates the following, as quoted in the *Calcutta Review*, No. 59, from Mirkhond's History of the Assassins.

"'One of the greatest of the wise men of Khorassán was the Imám Mowaffak of Naishápúr, a man highly honoured and reverenced,—may God rejoice his soul; his illustrious years exceeded eighty-five, and it was the universal belief that every boy who read the Koran or studied the traditions in his presence, would assuredly attain to honour and happiness. For this cause did my father

send me from Tús to Naisháṕur with Abd-us-samad, the doctor of law, that I might employ myself in study and learning under the guidance of that illustrious teacher. Towards me he ever turned an eye of favour and kindness, and as his pupil I felt for him extreme affection and devotion, so that I passed four years in his service. When I first came there, I found two other pupils of mine own age newly arrived, Hakim Omar Khayyám and the ill-fated Ben Sabbáh. Both were endowed with sharpness of wit and the highest natural powers; and we three formed a close friendship together. When the Imám rose from his lectures, they used to join me, and we repeated to each other the lessons we had heard. Now Omar was a native of Naisháṕur, while Hasan Ben Sabbáh's father was one Ali, a man of austere life and practice, but heretical in his

creed and doctrine. One day Hasan said to me and to Khayyám, "It is a universal belief that the pupils of the Imám Mowaffak will attain to fortune. Now, even if we *all* do not attain thereto, without doubt one of us will; what then shall be our mutual pledge and bond?" We answered, "Be it what you please." "Well," he said, "let us make a vow, that to whomsoever this fortune falls, he shall share it equally with the rest, and reserve no pre-eminence for himself." "Be it so," we both replied, and on those terms we mutually pledged our words. Years rolled on, and I went from Khorassán to Transoxiana, and wandered to Ghazni and Cabul; and when I returned I was invested with office, and rose to be administrator of affairs during the Sultanate of Sultan Alp Arslán.'

"He goes on to state, that years passed by,

and both his old school-friends found him out, and came and claimed a share in his good fortune, according to the school-day vow. The Vizier was generous and kept his word. Hasan demanded a place in the government, which the Sultan granted at the Vizier's request; but discontented with a gradual rise, he plunged into the maze of intrigue of an oriental court, and, failing in a base attempt to supplant his benefactor, he was disgraced and fell. After many mishaps and wanderings, Hasan became the head of the Persian sect of the *Ismailians*,—a party of fanatics who had long murmured in obscurity, but rose to an evil eminence under the guidance of his strong and evil will. In A.D. 1090, he seized the castle of Alamút, in the province of Rúdbar, which lies in the mountainous tract south of the Caspian Sea; and it was from this

mountain home he obtained that evil celebrity among the Crusaders as the OLD MAN OF THE MOUNTAINS, and spread terror through the Mohammedan world; and it is yet disputed whether the word *Assassin*, which they have left in the language of modern Europe as their dark memorial, is derived from the *hashish*, or opiate of hemp-leaves (the Indian *bhang*), with which they maddened themselves to the sullen pitch of Oriental desperation, or from the name of the founder of the dynasty, whom we have seen in his quiet collegiate days, at Naisháp'r. One of the countless victims of the Assassin's dagger was Nizám-ul-Mulk himself, the old school-boy friend.[1]

"Omar Khayyám also came to the Vizier to claim his share; but not to ask for title or

[1] Some of Omar's Rubáiyát warn us of the danger of Greatness, the instability of Fortune, and while advocating Charity to all Men, recommending us to be too

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou—

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office. 'The greatest boon you can confer on me,' he said, 'is to let me live in a corner under the shadow of your fortune, to spread wide the advantages of Science, and pray for your long life and prosperity.' The Vizier tells us, that, when he found Omar was really sincere in his refusal, he pressed him no further, but granted him a yearly pension of 1,200 *mithkáls* of gold, from the treasury of Naishápúr.

"At Naishápúr thus lived and died Omar Khayyám, 'busied,' adds the Vizier, 'in winning knowledge of every kind, and especially in Astronomy, wherein he attained to a very high pre-eminence. Under the Sultanate of Malik Shah, he came to Merv, and attained

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intimate with none. Attár makes Nizám-ul-Mulk use the very words of his friend Omar [Rub. xxviii.] "When Nizám-ul-Mulk was in the Agony (of Death) he said, 'O God! I am passing away in the hand of the Wind.'"

great praise for his proficiency in science, and the Sultan showered favours upon him.'

"When Malik Shah determined to reform the calendar, Omar was one of the eight learned men employed to do it; the result was the *Jaláli* era (so called from *Jalál-ud-din*, one of the king's names)—'a computation of time,' says Gibbon, 'which surpasses the Julian, and approaches the accuracy of the Gregorian style.' He is also the author of some astronomical tables, entitled 'Zíji-Malikshái,' and the French have lately republished and translated an Arabic Treatise of his on Algebra.

"His Takhallus or poetical name (Khayyám) signifies a Tent-maker, and he is said to have at one time exercised that trade, perhaps before Nizám-ul-Mulk's generosity raised him to independence. Many Persian poets similarly derive their names from their occupa-

tions; thus we have Attár, 'a druggist,' Assár 'an oil presser,' etc.[1] Omar himself alludes to his name in the following whimsical lines:—

'Khayyám, who stitched the tents of science,
Has fallen in grief's furnace and been suddenly burned;
The shears of Fate have cut the tent ropes of his life,
And the broker of Hope has sold him for nothing.'

"We have only one more anecdote to give of his Life, and that relates to the close; it is told in the anonymous preface which is sometimes prefixed to his poems; it has been printed in the Persian in the Appendix to Hyde's *Veterum Persarum Religio*, p. 499; and D'Herbelot alludes to it in his Bibliothèque, under *Khiam*:—[2]

[1] Though all these, like our Smiths, Archers, Millers, Fletchers, etc., may simply retain the Surname of a hereditary calling.

[2] "Philosophe Musulman qui a vêcu en Odeur de Sainteté dans sa Religion, vers la Fin du premier et le Commencement du second Siècle," no part of which, except the "Philosophe," can apply to our Khayyám.

"'It is written in the chronicles of the ancients that this King of the Wise, Omar Khayyám, died at Naishápúr in the year of the Hegira 517 (A.D. 1123); in science he was unrivalled—the very paragon of his age. Khwájah Nizámi of Samarcand, who was one of his pupils, relates the following story: "I often used to hold conversations with my teacher, Omar Khayyám, in a garden; and one day he said to me, 'My tomb shall be in a spot where the north wind may scatter roses over it.' I wondered at the words he spake, but I knew that his were no idle words.[1] Years

[1] The Rashness of the Words, according to D'Herbelot, consisted in being so opposed to those in the Korán: "No Man knows where he shall die!"—This story of Omar reminds me of another so naturally—and when one remembers how wide of his humble mark the noble sailor aimed—so pathetically told by Captain Cook—not by Doctor Hawkesworth—in his Second Voyage (i. 374). When leaving Ulietea, "Oreo's last request was for me to return. When he

after, when I chanced to visit Naishápúr, I went to his final resting-place, and lo! it was just outside a garden, and trees laden with fruit stretched their boughs over the garden wall, and dropped their flowers upon his tomb, so that the stone was hidden under them."'"

Thus far—without fear of Trespass—from the *Calcutta Review*. The writer of it, on reading in India this story of Omar's Grave, was reminded, he says, of Cicero's Account of finding Archimedes' Tomb at Syracuse, buried

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saw he could not obtain that promise. He asked the name of my *Marai* (burying-place). As strange a question as this was, I hesitated not a moment to tell him 'Stepney,' the parish in which I live when in London. I was made to repeat it several times over till they could pronounce it; and then 'Stepney Marai no Toote' was echoed through an hundred mouths at once. I afterwards found the same question had been put to Mr. Forster by a man on shore; but he gave a different, and indeed more proper answer, by saying, 'No man who used the sea could say where he should be buried.'"

in grass and weeds. I think Thorwaldsen desired to have roses grow over him; a wish religiously fulfilled for him to the present day, I believe. However, to return to Omar.

Though the Sultan "shower'd Favours upon him," Omar's Epicurean Audacity of Thought and Speech caused him to be regarded askance in his own Time and Country. He is said to have been especially hated and dreaded by the Súfis, whose Practice he ridiculed, and whose Faith amounts to little more than his own, when stript of the Mysticism and formal recognition of Islamism under which Omar would not hide. Their Poets, including Háfiz, who are (with the exception of Firdausi) the most considerable in Persia, borrowed largely, indeed, of Omar's material, but turning it to a mystical Use more convenient to Themselves

and the People they addressed; a People quite as quick of Doubt as of Belief; as keen of Bodily Sense as of Intellectual; and delighting in a cloudy composition of both, in which they could float luxuriously between Heaven and Earth, and this World and the Next, on the wings of a poetical expression, that might serve indifferently for either. Omar was too honest of Heart as well as of Head for this. Having failed (however mistakenly) of finding any Providence but Destiny, and any World but This, he set about making the most of it; preferring rather to soothe the Soul through the Senses into Acquiescence with Things as he saw them, than to perplex it with vain disquietude after what they *might* be. It has been seen, however, that his Worldly Ambition was not exorbitant; and he very likely takes a humorous or perverse pleasure in exalting the

gratification of Sense above that of the Intellect, in which he must have taken great delight, although it failed to answer the Questions in which he, in common with all men, was most vitally interested.

For whatever Reason, however, Omar, as before said, has never been popular in his own Country, and therefore has been but scantily transmitted abroad. The MSS. of his Poems, mutilated beyond the average Casualties of Oriental Transcription, are so rare in the East as scarce to have reacht Westward at all, in spite of all the acquisitions of Arms and Science. There is no copy at the India House, none at the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris. We know of but one in England: No 140 of the Ouseley MSS. at the Bodleian, written at Shiráz, A.D. 1460. This contains but 158 Rubáiyát. One in the

Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;

Asiatic Society's Library at Calcutta (of which we have a Copy), contains (and yet incomplete) 516, though swelled to that by all kinds of Repetition and Corruption. So Von Hammer speaks of *his* Copy as containing about 200, while Dr. Sprenger catalogues the Lucknow MS. at double that number.[1] The Scribes, too, of the Oxford and Calcutta MSS. seem to do their Work under a sort of Protest; each beginning with a Tetrastich (whether genuine or not), taken out of its alphabetical order; the Oxford with one of Apology; the Calcutta with one of Expostulation, supposed (says a Notice prefixed to the MS.) to have arisen from a Dream, in which Omar's mother

[1] "Since this paper was written" (adds the Reviewer in a note), "we have met with a Copy of a very rare Edition, printed in Calcutta in 1836. This contains 438 Tetrastichs, with an Appendix containing 54 others not found in some MSS."

asked about his future fate. It may be rendered thus :—

"Oh Thou who burn'st in Heart for those who burn
In Hell, whose fires thyself shall feed in turn;
How long be crying, 'Mercy on them, God!'
Why, who art Thou to teach, and He to learn?"

The Bodleian Quatrain pleads Pantheism by way of Justification :—

"If I myself upon a looser Creed
Have loosely strung the Jewel of Good Deed,
Let this one thing for my Atonement plead:
That One for Two I never did mis-read."

The Reviewer,[1] to whom I owe the Particulars of Omar's Life, concludes his Review by comparing him with Lucretius, both as to natural Temper and Genius, and as acted upon by the Circumstances in which he lived. Both indeed were men of subtle, strong, and cultivated Intellect, fine Imagination, and

[1] Professor Cowell.

Hearts passionate for Truth and Justice; who justly revolted from their Country's false Religion, and false, or foolish, Devotion to it; but who fell short of replacing what they subverted by such better *Hope* as others, with no better Revelation to guide them, had yet made a Law to themselves. Lucretius, indeed, with such material as Epicurus furnished, satisfied himself with the theory of a vast machine fortuitously constructed, and acting by a Law that implied no Legislator; and so composing himself into a Stoical rather than Epicurean severity of Attitude, sat down to contemplate the mechanical Drama of the Universe which he was part Actor in; himself and all about him (as in his own sublime description of the Roman Theatre) discoloured with the lurid reflex of the Curtain suspended between the Spectator and the Sun. Omar, more desper-

ate, or more careless of any so complicated System as resulted in nothing but hopeless Necessity, flung his own Genius and Learning with a bitter or humorous jest into the general Ruin which their insufficient glimpses only served to reveal; and, pretending sensual pleasure as the serious purpose of Life, only *diverted* himself with speculative problems of Deity, Destiny, Matter and Spirit, Good and Evil, and other such questions, easier to start than to run down, and the pursuit of which becomes a very weary sport at last!

With regard to the present Translation. The original Rubáiyát (as, missing an Arabic Guttural, these *Tetrastichs* are more musically called) are independent Stanzas, consisting each of four Lines of equal, though varied, Prosody; sometimes *all* rhyming, but oftener (as here imitated) the third line a blank.

Somewhat as in the Greek Alcaic, where the penultimate line seems to lift and suspend the Wave that falls over in the last. As usual with such kind of Oriental Verse, the Rubáiyát follow one another according to Alphabetic Rhyme—a strange succession of Grave and Gay. Those here selected are strung into something of an Eclogue, with perhaps a less than equal proportion of the "Drink and make-merry," which (genuine or not) recurs over-frequently in the Original. Either way, the Result is sad enough: saddest perhaps when most ostentatiously merry: more apt to move Sorrow than Anger towards the old Tent-maker, who, after vainly endeavouring to unshackle his Steps from Destiny, and to catch some authentic Glimpse of To-morrow, fell back upon To-day (which has outlasted so many To-morrows!) as the only Ground he

had got to stand upon, however momentarily slipping from under his Feet.

[From the Third Edition.]

While the second Edition of this version of Omar was preparing, Monsieur Nicolas, French Consul at Resht, published a very careful and very good Edition of the Text, from a lithograph copy at Teheran, comprising 464 Rubáiyát, with translation and notes of his own.

Mons. Nicolas, whose Edition has reminded me of several things, and instructed me in others, does not consider Omar to be the material Epicurean that I have literally taken him for, but a Mystic, shadowing the Deity under the figure of Wine, Wine-bearer, &c., as Háfiz is supposed to do; in short, a Súfi Poet like Háfiz and the rest.

I cannot see reason to alter my opinion, formed as it was more than a dozen years ago[1] when Omar was first shown me by one to whom I am indebted for all I know of Oriental, and very much other, literature. He admired Omar's Genius so much, that he would gladly have adopted any such Interpretation of his meaning as Mons. Nicolas' if he could.[2] That he could not, appears by his Paper in the *Calcutta Review* already so largely quoted; in which he argues from the Poems themselves, as well as from what records remain of the Poet's Life.

And if more were needed to disprove Mons. Nicolas' Theory, there is the Biographical

[1] [This was written in 1868.]

[2] Perhaps would have edited the Poems himself some years ago. He may now as little approve of my Version on one side, as of Mons. Nicolas' Theory on the other.

Notice which he himself has drawn up in direct contradiction to the Interpretation of the Poems given in his Notes. (See pp. xiii–xiv of his Preface.) Indeed I hardly knew poor Omar was so far gone till his Apologist informed me. For here we see that, whatever were the Wine that Háfiz drank and sang, the veritable Juice of the Grape it was which Omar used, not only when carousing with his friends, but (says Mons. Nicolas) in order to excite himself to that pitch of Devotion which others reached by cries and "hurlemens." And yet, whenever Wine, Wine-bearer, &c., occur in the text—which is often enough—Mons. Nicolas carefully annotates "Dieu," "La Divinité," &c.: so carefully indeed that one is tempted to think that he was indoctrinated by the Súfi with whom he read the Poems. (Note to Rub. ii., p. 8.) A Persian

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo, Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow."

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would naturally wish to vindicate a distinguished Countryman; and a Súfi to enrol him in his own sect, which already comprises all the chief Poets of Persia.

What historical Authority has Mons. Nicolas to show that Omar gave himself up "avec passion à l'étude de la philosophie des Soufis"? (Preface, p. xiii.) The Doctrines of Pantheism, Materialism, Necessity, &c., were not peculiar to the Súfi; nor to Lucretius before them; nor to Epicurus before him; probably the very original Irreligion of Thinking men from the first; and very likely to be the spontaneous growth of a Philosopher living in an Age of social and political barbarism, under shadow of one of the Two and Seventy Religions supposed to divide the world. Von Hammer (according to Sprenger's Oriental Catalogue) speaks of Omar as "a Free-

thinker, and *a great opponent of Sufism*"; perhaps because, while holding much of their Doctrine, he would not pretend to any inconsistent severity of morals. Sir W. Ouseley has written a note to something of the same effect on the fly-leaf of the Bodleian MS. And in two Rubáiyát of Mons. Nicolas' own Edition Súf and Súfi are both disparagingly named.

No doubt many of these Quatrains seem unaccountable unless mystically interpreted; but many more as unaccountable unless literally. Were the Wine spiritual, for instance, how wash the body with it when dead? Why make cups of the dead clay to be filled with—"La Divinité"—by some succeeding Mystic? Mons. Nicolas himself is puzzled by some "bizarres" and "trop Orientales" allusions and images—"d'une sensualité quelquefois

révoltante" indeed—which "les convenances" do not permit him to translate; but still which the reader cannot but refer to "La Divinité."[1] No doubt also many of the Quatrains in the Teheran, as in the Calcutta, Copies are spurious; such *Rubáiyát* being the common form of Epigram in Persia. But this, at best, tells as much one way as another; nay, the Súfi, who may be considered the Scholar and Man

[1] A Note to Quatrain 234 admits that, however clear the mystical meaning of such Images must be to Europeans, they are not quoted without "rougissant" even by laymen in Persia—"Quant aux termes de tendresse qui commencent ce quatrain, comme tant d'autres dans ce recueil, nos lecteurs, habitués maintenant à l'étrangeté des expressions si souvent employés par Khéyam pour rendre ses pensées sur l'amour divin, et à la singularité de ses images trop orientales, d'une sensualité quelquefois révoltante, n'auront pas de peine à se persuader qu'il s'agit de la Divinité, bien que cette conviction soit vivement discutée par les moullahs musulmans et même par beaucoup de laïques, qui rougissent véritablement d'une pareille licence de leur compatriote à l'égard des choses spirituelles."

of Letters in Persia, would be far more likely than the careless Epicure to interpolate what favours his own view of the Poet. I observe that very few of the more mystical Quatrains are in the Bodleian MS., which must be one of the oldest, as dated at Shiráz, A.H. 865, A.D. 1460. And this, I think, especially distinguishes Omar (I cannot help calling him by his —no, not Christian—familiar name) from all other Persian Poets: That, whereas with them the Poet is lost in his Song, the Man in Allegory and Abstraction; we seem to have the Man—the *Bonhomme*—Omar himself, with all his Humours and Passions, as frankly before us as if we were really at Table with him, after the Wine had gone round.

I must say that I, for one, never wholly believed in the Mysticism of Háfiz. It does not appear there was any danger in holding

and singing Súfi Pantheism, so long as the Poet made his Salaam to Mohammed at the beginning and end of his Song. Under such conditions Jeláluddín, Jámí, Attár, and others sang; using Wine and Beauty indeed as Images to illustrate, not as a Mask to hide, the Divinity they were celebrating. Perhaps some Allegory less liable to mistake or abuse had been better among so inflammable a People: much more so when, as some think with Háfiz and Omar, the abstract is not only likened to, but identified with, the sensual Image; hazardous, if not to the Devotee himself, yet to his weaker Brethren; and worse for the Profane in proportion as the Devotion of the Initiated grew warmer. And all for what? To be tantalized with Images of sensual enjoyment which must be renounced if one would approximate a God, who, according

to the Doctrine, *is* Sensual Matter as well as Spirit, and into whose Universe one expects unconsciously to merge after Death, without hope of any posthumous Beatitude in another world to compensate for all one's self-denial in this. Lucretius' blind Divinity certainly merited, and probably got, as much self-sacrifice as this of the Súfi; and the burden of Omar's Song—if not "Let us eat"—is assuredly—"Let us drink, for To-morrow we die!" And if Háfiz meant quite otherwise by a similar language, he surely miscalculated when he devoted his Life and Genius to so equivocal a Psalmody as, from his Day to this, has been said and sung by any rather than Spiritual Worshippers.

However, as there is some traditional presumption, and certainly the opinion of some learned men, in favour of Omar's being a Súfi

How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destin'd Hour, and went his way.

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—and even something of a Saint—those who please may so interpret his Wine and Cup-bearer. On the other hand, as there is far more historical certainty of his being a Philosopher, of scientific Insight and Ability far beyond that of the Age and Country he lived in; of such moderate worldly Ambition as becomes a Philosopher, and such moderate wants as rarely satisfy a Debauchee; other readers may be content to believe with me that, while the Wine Omar celebrates is simply the Juice of the Grape, he bragg'd more than he drank of it, in very defiance perhaps of that Spiritual Wine which left its Votaries sunk in Hypocrisy or Disgust.

Rubáiyát
of
Omar Khayyám of Naishápúr

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fourth Edition

Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám

I

WAKE! For the Sun who scatter'd into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Drives Night along with them from Heav'n,
and strikes
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

II

Before the phantom of False morning died,
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
"When all the Temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside?"

III

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

IV

Now the New Year reviving old Desires
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the ground suspires.

V

Iram indeed is gone with all his Rose
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows,
But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

Ah! lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

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VI

And David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Pehlevi, with "Wine! Wine!
Wine!
Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to the
Rose
That sallow cheek of hers t' incarnadine.

VII

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling;
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

VIII

Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by
drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

IX

Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?
And this first Summer month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád away.

X

Well, let it take them! What have we to do
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú?
Let Zál and Rustum bluster as they will,
Or Hátim call to Supper—heed not you.

XI

With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot—
And Peace to Mahmúd on his golden Throne!

XII

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

XIII

Some for the Glories of this World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come,
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

XIV

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

XV

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,
And those who flung it to the winds like
Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As buried once, Men want dug up again.

XVI

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone.

XVII

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destin'd Hour, and went his way.

Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears
To-Day of past Regret and Future Fears:

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XVIII

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
And Bahrám, that great hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

XIX

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

XX

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

XXI

Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears
To-day of past Regret and future Fears:
To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.

XXII

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his Vintage rolling Time has prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

XXIII

And we that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—for whom?

XXIV

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—
sans End!

XXV

Alike for those who for To-day prepare,
And those that after some To-morrow stare,
A Muezzín from the Tower of Darkness cries,
"Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor
There."

XXVI

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the two Worlds so wisely—they are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to
Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with
Dust.

XXVII

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about; but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

XXVIII

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd—
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

XXIX

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing;
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument.

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XXX

What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence?*
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence!
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

XXXI

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
And many a Knot unravel'd by the Road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

XXXII

There was the Door to which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which I might not see;
Some little talk awhile of ME and THEE
There was—and then no more of THEE and ME.

XXXIII

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;
Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs reveal'd
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

XXXIV

Then of the THEE IN ME who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
A lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard,
As from without—"THE ME WITHIN THEE BLIND!"

XXXV

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn
I lean'd, the Secret of my Life to learn;
And Lip to Lip it murmur'd—"While you live,
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall return."

XXXVI

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answer'd, once did live,
And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I kiss'd,
How many Kisses might it take—and give!

XXXVII

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay:
And with its all-obliterated Tongue
It murmur'd—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"

XXXVIII

And has not such a Story from of Old
Down Man's successive generations roll'd
Of such a clod of saturated Earth
Cast by the Maker into Human mould?

XXXIX

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw
For Earth to drink of, but may steal below
To quench the fire of Anguish in some Eye
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

XL

As then the Tulip for her morning sup
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks up,
Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you—like an empty Cup.

XLI

Perplext no more with Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn; *Page 85*

XLII

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends in—Yes;
Think then you are To-day what Yester-
day
You were—To-morrow you shall not be less.

XLIII

So when the Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not
shrink.

XLIV

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Were't not a Shame—were't not a Shame
for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

XLV

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one day's rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrásh
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

XLVI

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
The Eternal Sákí from that Bowl has pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

XLVII

When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble cast.

XLVIII

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of BEING from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has reach'd
The NOTHING it set out from—Oh, make haste!

XLIX

Would you that spangle of Existence spend
About the SECRET—quick about it, Friend!
A Hair perhaps divides the False and True;
And upon what, prithee, does life depend?

L

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True
Yes; and a single Alif were the clue—
Could you but find it—to the Treasure-house,
And peradventure to THE MASTER too;

LI

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;
Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi; and
They change and perish all—but He remains;

LII

A moment guess'd—then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.

LIII

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,
You gaze To-day, while You are You—how then
To-morrow, You when shall be You no more?

So when the Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,

Page 89

LIV

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of This and That endeavour and dispute;
Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

LV

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house;
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

LVI

For "Is" and "Is-NOT" though with Rule and Line,
And "UP-AND-DOWN" by Logic I define,
Of all that one should care to fathom, I
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

LVII

Ah, but my Computations, People say,
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?—
Nay,
'T was only striking from the Calendar
Unborn To-morrow and dead Yesterday.

LVIII

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came shining through the Dusk an Angel
Shape
Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bid me taste of it; and 't was—the Grape!

LIX

The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute:
The sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute:

LX

The mighty Mahmúd, Allah-breathing Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

LXI

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare
Blaspheme the twisted tendril as a Snare?
A Blessing, we should use it, should we not?
And if a Curse—why, then, Who set it there?

LXII

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on trust,
Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,
To fill the Cup—when crumbled into Dust!

LXIII

Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain—*This* life flies;
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown forever dies.

LXIV

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

LXV

The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burn'd,
Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep,
They told their comrades, and to Sleep return'd.

LXVI

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul return'd to me,
And answer'd "I myself am Heav'n and Hell."

LXVII

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfill'd Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerg'd from, shall so soon expire.

LXVIII

We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with the Sun-illumin'd Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

LXIX

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days:
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

LXX

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;
And He that toss'd you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!

LXXI

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it,

The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;

LXXII

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling coop'd we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for it
As impotently moves as you or I.

LXXIII

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sow'd the Seed:
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

LXXIV

YESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did prepare;
TO-MORROW's Silence, Triumph, or Despair:
Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why:
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.

LXXV

I tell you this—When, started from the Goal,
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
Of Heav'n Parwin and Mushtarí they flung,
In my predestin'd Plot of Dust and Soul

LXXVI

The Vine had struck a fibre: which about
If clings my Being—let the Dervish flout;
Of my Base metal may be filed a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

LXXVII

And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me quite,
One flash of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

LXXVIII

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

LXXIX

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allay'd—
Sue for a Debt we never did contract
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!

LXXX

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestin'd Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

LXXXI

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take!

* * * * * *

LXXXII

As under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán away,
Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

LXXXIII

Shapes of all sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
And some loquacious vessels were; and some
Listen'd perhaps, but never talk'd at all.

Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

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LXXXIV

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common Earth was ta'en
And to this Figure moulded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."

LXXXV

Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy;
And He that with his hand the Vessel made
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

LXXXVI

After a momentary silence spake
Some Vessel of a more ungainly make;
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry:
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"

LXXXVII

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot—
I think a Súfi pipkin—waxing hot—
"All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me then,
Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?"

LXXXVIII

"Why," said another, "Some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell
The luckless Pots he marr'd in making—Pish!
He's a Good Fellow, and 't will all be well."

LXXXIX

"Well," murmur'd one, "Let whoso make or buy,
My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry:
But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
Methinks I might recover by and by."

XC

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
The little Moon look'd in that all were seeking:
And then they jogg'd each other, "Brother!
Brother!
Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking!"

* * * * * *

XCI

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

XCII

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

XCIII

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in this World much wrong:
Have drown'd my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

XCIV

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

XCV

And much as Wine has play'd the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour—Well,
I wonder often what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.

XCVI

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

XCVII

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, reveal'd,
To which the fainting Traveller might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

XCVIII

Would but some wingèd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

XCIX

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's desire!

* * * * * *

C

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

CI

And when like her, oh Sákí, you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!

TAMÁM

And in your joyous Errand reach the Spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!

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Notes

(Stanza II.) The "*False Dawn*"; *Subhi Kázib*, a transient Light on the Horizon about an hour before the *Subhi sádik*, or True Dawn; a well-known Phenomenon in the East.

(IV.) New Year. Beginning with the Vernal Equinox, it must be remembered; and (howsoever the old Solar Year is practically superseded by the clumsy *Lunar* Year that dates from the Mohammedan Hijra) still commemorated by a Festival that is said to have been appointed by the very Jamshyd whom Omar so often talks of, and whose yearly Calendar he helped to rectify.

"The sudden approach and rapid advance of the Spring," says Mr. Binning,[1] "are very striking. Before the Snow is well off the Ground, the Trees burst into Blossom, and the Flowers start forth from the Soil. At *Now Rooz* [*their* New Year's Day] the Snow was lying in patches on the Hills and in the shaded Valleys, while the Fruit-trees in the Gardens were budding beautifully,

[1] *Two Years' Travel in Persia*, &c., i. 165.

and green Plants and Flowers springing up on the Plains on every side—

'And on old Hyems' Chin and icy Crown
'An odorous Chaplet of sweet Summer buds
'Is, as in mockery, set.'—

Among the Plants newly appeared I recognised some old Acquaintances I had not seen for many a Year: among these, two varieties of the Thistle—a coarse species of Daisy like the 'Horse-gowan'—red and white Clover—the Dock—the blue Cornflower—and that vulgar Herb the Dandelion rearing its yellow crest on the Banks of the Water-courses." The Nightingale was not yet heard, for the Rose was not yet blown: but an almost identical Blackbird and Woodpecker helped to make up something of a North-country Spring.

"The White Hand of Moses." Exodus iv. 6; where Moses draws forth his Hand—not, according to the Persians, "*leprous as Snow*,"—but *white*, as our May-blossom in Spring perhaps. According to them also the Healing Power of Jesus resided in his Breath.

(v.) Iram, planted by King Shaddád, and now sunk somewhere in the Sands of Arabia. Jamshyd's Seven-ring'd Cup was typical of the 7 Heavens, 7 Planets, 7 Seas, &c., and was a *Divining Cup*.

(vi.) *Pehlevi*, the old Heroic *Sanskrit* of Persia. Háfiz also speaks of the Nightingale's *Pehlevi*, which did not change with the People's.

I am not sure if the fourth line refers to the Red

Rose looking sickly, or to the Yellow Rose that ought to be Red; Red, White, and Yellow Roses all common in Persia. I think that Southey, in his Common-Place Book, quotes from some Spanish author about the Rose being White till 10 o'clock; "Rosa Perfecta" at 2; and "perfecta incarnada" at 5.

(x.) Rustum, the "Hercules" of Persia, and Zál, his Father, whose exploits are among the most celebrated in the Sháhnáma. Hátim Tai, a well-known type of Oriental Generosity.

(XIII.) A Drum—beaten outside a Palace.

(XIV.) That is, the Rose's Golden Centre.

(XVIII.) Persepolis: call'd also *Takht-i-Jamshyd*—THE THRONE OF JAMSHYD, "*King Splendid*," of the mythical *Peshdádian* Dynasty, and supposed (according to the Sháhnáma) to have been founded and built by him. Others refer it to the Work of the Genie King, Ján Ibn Ján—who also built the Pyramids—before the time of Adam.

BAHRÁM GÚR—*Bahrám of the Wild Ass*—a Sassanian Sovereign—had also his Seven Castles (like the King of Bohemia!) each of a different Colour: each with a Royal Mistress within; each of whom tells him a Story, as told in one of the most famous Poems of Persia, written by Amír Khusraw: all these Sevens also

figuring (according to Eastern Mysticism) the Seven Heavens; and perhaps the Book itself that Eighth, into which the mystical Seven transcend, and within which they revolve. The Ruins of Three of those Towers are yet shown by the Peasantry; as also the Swamp in which Bahrám sunk, like the Master of Ravenswood, while pursuing his *Gúr*.

The Palace that to Heav'n his pillars threw,
And Kings the forehead on his threshold drew—
I saw the solitary Ringdove there,
And "Coo, coo, coo," she cried; and "Coo, coo, coo."

This Quatrain Mr. Binning found, among several of Háfiz and others, inscribed by some stray hand among the ruins of Persepolis. The Ringdove's ancient *Peh-levi Coo, Coo, Coo*, signifies also in Persian "*Where? Where? Where?*" In Attár's "Bird-parliament" she is reproved by the Leader of the Birds for sitting still, and for ever harping on that one note of lamentation for her lost Yúsuf.

Apropos of Omar's Red Roses in Stanza xix, I am reminded of an old English Superstition, that our Anemone Pulsatilla, or purple "Pasque Flower" (which grows plentifully about the Fleam Dyke, near Cambridge), grows only where Danish Blood has been spilt.

(XXI.) A thousand years to each Planet.

(XXXI.) Saturn, Lord of the Seventh Heaven.

(XXXII.) ME-AND-THEE: some dividual Existence or Personality distinct from the Whole.

Notes

(XXXVII.) One of the Persian Poets—Attár, I think—has a pretty story about this. A thirsty Traveller dips his hand into a Spring of Water to drink from. By-and-by comes another who draws up and drinks from an earthen Bowl, and then departs, leaving his Bowl behind him. The first Traveller takes it up for another draught; but is surprised to find that the same Water which had tasted sweet from his own hand tastes bitter from the earthen Bowl. But a Voice—from Heaven, I think—tells him the clay from which the Bowl is made was once *Man;* and, into whatever shape renewed, can never lose the bitter flavour of Mortality.

(XXXIX.) The custom of throwing a little Wine on the ground before drinking still continues in Persia, and perhaps generally in the East. Mons. Nicolas considers it "un signe de libéralité, et en même temps un avertissement que le buveur doit vider sa coupe jusquá' la dernière goutte." Is it not more likely an ancient Superstition; a Libation to propitiate Earth, or make her an Accomplice in the illicit Revel? Or, perhaps, to divert the Jealous Eye by some sacrifice of superfluity, as with the Ancients of the West? With Omar we see something more is signified; the precious Liquor is not lost, but sinks into the ground to refresh the dust of some poor Wine-worshipper foregone.

Thus Háfiz, copying Omar in so many ways: "When thou drinkest Wine pour a draught on the ground. Wherefore fear the Sin which brings to another Gain?"

(XLIII.) According to one beautiful Oriental Legend, Azräel accomplishes his mission by holding to the nostril an Apple from the Tree of Life.

This and the two following Stanzas would have been withdrawn, as somewhat *de trop*, from the Text, but for advice which I least like to disregard.

(LI.) From Máh to Máhi; from Fish to Moon.

(LVI.) A Jest, of course, at his Studies. A curious mathematical Quatrain of Omar's has been pointed out to me; the more curious because almost exactly parallel'd by some Verses of Doctor Donne's that are quoted in Izaak Walton's Lives! Here is Omar: "You and I are the image of a pair of compasses; though we have two heads (sc. our *feet*) we have one body; when we have fixed the centre for our circle, we bring our heads (sc. feet) together at the end." Dr. Donne:

If we be two, we two are so
As stiff twin-compasses are two;
Thy Soul, the fixt foot, makes no show
To move, but does if the other do.

And though thine in the centre sit,
Yet when my other far does roam,
Thine leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect as mine comes home.

Such thou must be to me, who must
Like the other foot obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And me to end where I begun.

Notes

(LIX.) The Seventy-two Religions supposed to divide the World, *including* Islamism, as some think: but others not.

(LX.) Alluding to Sultan Mahmúd's Conquest of India and its dark people.

(LXVIII.) *Fánúsi khiyál*, a Magic-lantern still used in India; the cylindrical Interior being painted with various Figures, and so lightly poised and ventilated as to revolve round the lighted Candle within.

(LXX.) A very mysterious Line in the Original:

O dánad O dánad O dánad O——

breaking off something like our Wood-pigeon's Note, which she is said to take up just where she left off.

(LXXV.) Parwín and Mushtarí—The Pleiads and Jupiter.

(LXXXVII.) This Relation of Pot and Potter to Man and his Maker figures far and wide in the Literature of the World, from the time of the Hebrew Prophets to the present; when it may finally take the name of "Pot theism," by which Mr. Carlyle ridiculed Sterling's "Pantheism." *My* Sheikh, whose knowledge flows in from all quarters, writes to me—

"Apropos of old Omar's Pots, did I ever tell you the sentence I found in 'Bishop Pearson on the Creed'? 'Thus are we wholly at the disposal of His will, and

our present and future condition framed and ordered by His free, but wise and just, decrees. *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?* (Rom. ix. 21). And can that earth-artificer have a freer power over his *brother potsherd* (both being made of the same metal), than God hath over him, who, by the strange fecundity of His omnipotent power, first made the clay out of nothing, and then him out of that?'"

And again—from a very different quarter—"I had to refer the other day to Aristophanes, and came by chance on a curious Speaking-pot story in the Vespæ which I had quite forgotten.

Φιλοκλέων. Ἄκουε, μὴ φεῦγ'· ἐν Συβάρει γυνή ποτε l. 1435
κατέαξ ἐχῖνον.
Κατήγορος. Ταῦτ' ἐγὼ μαρτυρομαι.
Φι. Οὐχῖνος οὖν ἔχων τιν' ἐπεμαρτύρατο·
Εἶθ' ἡ Συβαρῖτις εἶπεν, εἰ ναὶ τὰν κόραν
τὴν μαρτυρίαν ταύτην ἐάσας, ἐν τάχει
ἐπιδεσμον ἐπρίω, νοῦν ἂν εἶχες πλείονα.

"The Pot calls a bystander to be a witness to his bad treatment. The woman says, 'If, by Proserpine, instead of all this 'testifying' (comp. Cuddie and his mother in 'Old Mortality!') you would buy yourself a rivet, it would show more sense in you!' The Scholiast explains *echinus* as *ἄγγος τι ἐκ κεράμου*."

One more illustration for the oddity's sake from the "Autobiography of a Cornish Rector," by the late James Hamley Tregenna. 1871.

"There was one old Fellow in our Company—he was so like a Figure in the 'Pilgrim's Progress' that Richard always called him the 'ALLEGORY,' with a long white beard—a rare Appendage in those days—and a Face the colour of which seemed to have been baked in, like the Faces one used to see on Earthenware Jugs. In our Country-dialect Earthenware is called '*Clome*'; so the Boys of the Village used to shout out after him—'Go back to the Potter, old Clome-face, and get baked over again.' For the 'Allegory,' though shrewd enough in most things, had the reputation of being '*saift-baked*,' i. e., of weak intellect."

(XC.) At the Close of the Fasting Month, Ramazán (which makes the Musulman unhealthy and unamiable), the first Glimpse of the New Moon (who rules their division of the Year), is looked for with the utmost Anxiety, and hailed with Acclamation. Then it is that the Porter's Knot may be heard—toward the *Cellar*. Omar has else where a pretty Quatrain about the same Moon—

"Be of Good Cheer—the sullen Month will die,
"And a young Moon requite us by and by;
"Look how the Old one meagre, bent, and wan
"With Age and Fast, is fainting from the Sky!"

New Light on Omar Khayyam

A REMARKABLE ANALYSIS OF FITZGERALD'S VERSION OF THE PERSIAN POET.

By EDWARD S. HOLDEN.

Edward Fitzgerald's translation of the quatrains of the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam, has taken its place as one of the classics of English literature and it has had thousands upon thousands of readers in America and in England. Fitzgerald and Lord Tennyson were life-long friends. Tennyson was the Poet Laureate and the foremost man of letters of his country. Fitzgerald, during nearly all his life, was only known as an obscure scholar and student. Yet it is likely that in the centuries to come no more

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of Tennyson's work will remain than is contained in the thin volumes of Fitzgerald. Tennyson's place in our literature is secure, but it is no more secure than Fitzgerald's.

When it is considered that the only claim of Fitzgerald was to present in an English dress the poems of the astronomer-poet of Persia who died nearly eight centuries ago, his fame is at first sight inexplicable. It is, indeed, not to be explained at all until we realize that Fitzgerald was far more than a translator. Prof. Charles Eliot Norton has expressed his real office in the most luminous way. He says: "Fitzgerald is to be called 'translator' only in default of a better word, one which should express the poetic transfusion of a poetic spirit from one language to another, and the re-representation of the ideas and images of the original in a form not altogether diverse from their own, but perfectly adapted to the new conditions of time, place, custom and habit of mind in which they reappear. It is the work of a poet inspired by the work of a poet; not a translation, but the redelivery of a poetic inspiration."

Prof. Norton wrote more than thirty years ago. Since that time the whole field has been thoroughly worked. The libraries of Europe and Asia have been ransacked and many manuscripts of Omar's poems, previously unknown, have been brought to light. Nearly a score such are now known. These manuscripts, and others, are represented by a dozen lithographed editions of his work. Translations have been published in the present century in German, French, Italian, Hungarian and English. Eight or nine issues have been made in England of Fitzgerald's translation, besides fourteen or more in America. Half a dozen other Englishmen have also published independent translations, and a very long list could be made of critical articles printed in magazines and reviews. The bare enumeration of such particulars is a convincing proof of the hold that these Oriental poems have upon our Western imaginations. Nowhere is the hold stronger than in our own country.

Why is this hold so strong and intimate? The Persians are, in the first place, human beings like ourselves. They have wants, hopes,

fears, delights, and joys, and they seek the satisfaction of these in like fashion. Any graphic and truthful recital of human feeling interests us. In the case of the Persians it is more than this. While the form of their poetry is as alien to us as that of the Chinese or of the Tartars, the feelings struggling for expression are not foreign. We are of Aryan blood as they are, and thousands of years of different experiences have not shut the door between us. During all these centuries the culture of the East has, in one way or another, touched the West. Their art, their architecture, their chivalry, transformed it is true, have influenced our own most intimately.

Alexander the Great destroyed at Persepolis (B. C. 330) buildings more magnificent than any others ever seen on the round world, not excepting the monuments of Athens. The looms of Persia made Constantinople splendid. The Persians transmitted the immortal fables and apologues of India to the Arabs, and through them to the West. The works of a Persian sage (Avicenna) were text books in the University of Paris so late as the time of

Louis XIV. When Benjamin Franklin was seeking for a new chapter of the Bible he found it in Sa'adi's "Parable of Abraham and the Fire Worshipper." Our little children are bred upon the tales of the "Arabian Nights," a great part of which are of Persian origin. In a thousand unacknowledged ways the West has been taught by the East. When England was a wilderness inhabited by savages Persia was polite, cultivated, learned and illustrious. Whether we know it or not, we have learned much from them, and our thoughts still respond to theirs.

It is the form of their thoughts, and especially of their poetic thoughts, that is alien. It is worth while to dwell a little upon this point. One of the odes of Hafiz reads, in the Persian, as follows:

The Persian is written in italics, and necessary words are supplied in parentheses:

(The) *entrance* (of my) *face* (that is) *my eye* (is) *thy nest*

(With) *courtesy increasing*, *sit down* (in this) *house* (it is) *thy house*.

What are we to do with this? We must

reach the meaning of Hafiz by a series of approximations, each time coming a step nearer to Occidental forms, but always preserving the Oriental feeling—if we can. Hafiz would certainly have accepted the following couplet as his own:

The vestibule of my face (my eye) *is a nest for you:*
Be gracious, oh, sit down: my house is your house.

The learned editor of Hafiz—Rosensweig—has versified this in German:

Meines Auges Halle will Ich
Dir zum Neste weih'n
Sass' in ihr dich gnädig nieder.
Denn das Haus is dein.

This ode has also been made part of an English sonnet, as follows:

From Hafiz's lips, in centuries gone by,
The honeyed couplets of this artless ode,
Like limpid drops of dew, successive flowed:

"My love," he said, "the globe of Hafiz's eye
Thy mansion is; then enter graciously,
Be welcome, rest, remain—for this abode
Is by its owner on his guest bestowed
With honor and in hospitality."

How true the poet's crystal accent rings,
And with what grave sincerity he sings
His song of passion and of courtesy!

At the small opening of the lover's eye
The loved one knocks—then enters—thence
departs
Only to dwell within his heart of hearts!

Each one of these translations is a progress away from the form of Hafiz's couplet; each one of them is a step toward his meaning restated in modern and in English fashion. The problem of translation is to change the form without losing the flavor. If the translator leaves the form, as in the lines "the vestibule of my face is a nest for you," the oddity of the image obscures its beauty to the general reader, who may not know that the eye is often so called in Oriental verse, just as a slender girl is "a cypress," a blood-stained warrior "a Judas tree" and so forth. If one translates as literally as Rosenzweig one comes to bald expressions like these, "Sit down graciously in the hall of my eye; it is dedicated as a nest for you: the house is yours." If one follows the lines of the sonnet some of the verbal ex-

pressions of Hafiz are quite lost while his meaning is, perhaps, still preserved.

The lesson to be learned is that if the translator is satisfied to reproduce in English the poetic inspiration of the Persian and is not concerned to reproduce its verbal forms, he may employ verse as a vehicle.

This was the method of Fitzgerald, as we shall see. If, on the other hand, his aim is to give the thoughts of the poet as he conceived them, the translator must abandon verse and express himself in prose—in a balanced and poetic prose, if possible, but still in prose.

Two important books dealing with Omar Khayyam and with Fitzgerald's translation of him have lately appeared from the hand of Mr. Edward Heron-Allen of London. The first is "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam; a facsimile of the MS. in the Bodleian Library, translated and edited by Edward Heron-Allen: London, Nichols, 1898:" the other is "Edward Fitzgerald's Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam with their original Persian sources, collated from his own MSS., and literally translated by Edward Heron-Allen: London, Quaritch,

1899." It is proposed to give here a short account of them, because they throw a flood of light on the questions we have been considering.

The first contains a photographic reproduction of the pages of a manuscript of Omar's poems, belonging to the Bodleian Library at Oxford; a transliteration of the written Persian characters in the printed characters; a translation of the poem into rhythmic English prose, together with an introduction and a very interesting and scholarly chapter, entitled "Some Sidelights Upon Edward Fitzgerald's Poem." The manuscript in the Bodleian Library is the one employed by Fitzgerald himself.

The second volume is really an expansion of the terminal chapter of the first. It gives upon each left-hand page a quatrain of Omar Khayyam as translated by Fitzgerald, and upon the opposite page the original Persian which Fitzgerald used, together with a prose translation by Mr. Heron-Allen and copious notes and references. This arrangement permits a careful examination of Fitzgerald's

work, and from a study of both books it becomes possible to say where he obtained the inspiration for his translation, how far the poems that we have accepted as Omar's are really his, and how far they are derived from a general reading of other authors or from purely English ideas that would have been unfamiliar and alien to the Persian poet.

Mr. Allen has studied these questions with ardor and persistence. He has read every line of the printed correspondence left by Fitzgerald so as to obtain an accurate idea of the course of his studies. Mr. Allen knows, day by day, what books Fitzgerald was reading, what grammars and dictionaries he was consulting, and is able to follow, so far as another man can, his thoughts. Moreover, by great diligence, Mr. Allen has obtained a copy of each and every one of these books and manuscripts, and has surrounded himself with the precise apparatus used by the first translator. Finally he has made a complete translation of the very manuscript that Fitzgerald employed.

"I find myself," he says, "in the interesting

position of having the whole of Fitzgerald's material before me." The result of his examination of it is summarized as follows:

The third edition of Fitzgerald's book contains one hundred and one quatrains. Of these "forty-nine are faithful and beautiful paraphrases" of single quatrains of Omar; forty-four are traceable to two or more stanzas of the originals in Fitzgerald's hands; two are inspired by translations of Omar that Fitzgerald had seen; two are derived from Hafiz's odes; two from a Persian poem (the Mantik-ut-tair) and two, Mr. Allen says, "reflect the whole spirit of the original poem." The last six have no prototypes in Omar, of course.

We may pause a moment to note the exceeding industry and patience of Mr. Allen's researches. They do honor to him no less than to Fitzgerald and to Omar. His general conclusion upon Fitzgerald's poem is expressed as follows: "A translation pure and simple it is *not*, but a translation in the most artistic sense it undoubtedly is." In what is to follow portions of Mr. Allen's book will be quoted so that the reader may test this conclusion for

himself. First will be printed some of the stanzas of Fitzgerald's poem, and next the excellent prose translation of Mr. Allen. Readers who are comparatively unfamiliar with Persian poetry will thus be able to see it in an unvarnished, unsophisticated form; readers who already have a familiarity of the sort will be charmed with the verbal felicities of Mr. Allen's prose, and every one will derive some new pleasure from a comparison of the two.

Here, for example, is a quatrain that is, in its way, famous:

> Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth did make,
> And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
> For all the sin wherewith the Face of Man
> Is blackened—Man's forgiveness give—and take.

Will it be believed that this tetrastich is not to be found in Omar at all? It is a pure invention of Fitzgerald's. Its very sound is modern, and its attitude is not Omar's, but another's.

Mr. Heron-Allen has found no real equivalent for it anywhere, though he has tried earnestly. Much controversy has raged about this

stanza and there is no space available to present even an abstract of it. The present writer can find nothing Persian in it except the figure of a face blackened by sin, which is common in Oriental writing. In fact Fitzgerald's conception of sin is, in the writer's opinion, not Mohammed's and not Omar's, but a compound of Calvin's and Milton's, and the Calvinists of Islamism were 600 years later than Omar. It is a matter of individual taste, learning and judgment to decide whether Fitzgerald has not, in this instance, exceeded the widest permissible license of a translator.

Leaving such questions, about which controversy is endless, we may cite instances of perfectly legitimate translation, choosing the most famous quatrains.

XII.

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow.

This is a happy version of the original:

I desire a flask of ruby wine and a book of verses,
just enough to keep me alive—and half a loaf is needful;
And then, that thou and I should sit in the wilderness
Is better than the Kingdom of a Sultan.

There is still another form of this stanza in the original as follows:

If a loaf of wheaten bread be forthcoming,
A gourd of wine, and a thigh-bone of mutton,
And then, if thou and I be sitting in the wilderness,
That were a joy not within the power of any Sultan.

Fitzgerald writes:

XIV.

Look to the flowing rose about us—"Lo,
"Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
"At once the silken tassel of my purse
"Tear, and its treasure on the garden throw."

The rose said: I brought a gold-scattering hand:
Laughing, laughing, have I blown into the world;
I snatched the noose-string from off the head of my purse, and I am gone!
I flung into the world all the ready money I had!

XVI.

The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
Turns ashes—or it prospers; and anon
Like snow upon the desert's dusty face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

Oh heart! suppose all this world's affairs were within
your power,
And the whole world from end to end as you desire it
And then, like snow in the desert upon its surface,
Resting for two or three days, understand yourself to
be gone.

XIX.

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

Everywhere that there has been a rose or tulip bed,
It has come from the redness of the blood of a king:
Every violet shoot that grows from the earth
Is a mole that was (once) on the cheek of a beauty.

XXIX.

Into this Universe and Why not knowing,
Nor Whence, like Water willy nilly flowing:
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing.

This is from the original:

He first brought me in confusion into existence.
What do I gain from life save my amazement at it?
We went away against our will, and we know not what
it was—
The purpose of this coming, and going, and being.

LXIV.

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover, we must travel, too.

I have travelled far in a-wandering by valley and desert,
It came to pass that I wandered in all quarters of the world;
I have not heard from anyone who came from that road,
The road he travelled, no traveller travels again.

LXVII.

Heav'n, but the Vision of fulfilled Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul of fire,
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

Hell is a spark from my useless worries,
Paradise is a moment of time when I am tranquil.

LXIX.

Impotent Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Checkerboard of Nights and Days,
Hither and thither moves, and checks and slays,
And one by one back in the closet lays.

This quatrain is the version of:

To speak plain language, and not in parables,
We are the pieces and heaven plays the game:
We are played together in a baby-game upon the chess-
board of existence,
And one by one we return to the box of non-existence.

XCVI.

Yet ah! that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah! whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

Alas! that the book of youth is folded up!
And that this fresh purple spring is winter-stricken;
That bird of joy, whose name is youth,
Alas! I know not whence it came, nor when it went.

The foregoing comparisons put the reader in an independent critical position. It is possible for him to judge just how closely Fitzgerald has followed his original and in how far he has at times departed from it in spirit and in form. Mr. Heron-Allen's books are indispensable to any one who wishes thoroughly to understand and enjoy the poems of Omar and of Fitzgerald. After all his labor the student will finally accept Prof. Norton's ver-

dict, already quoted: Fitzgerald's poem is "not a copy, but a reproduction, not a translation, but the redelivery of a poetic inspiration." For the materials upon which a critical judgment may be based we are indebted to the two books of Mr. Heron-Allen.